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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2017

TAGS: PREL SOCI AM KG TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: DIP DOYEN DEPARTS

Classified By: CHARGE RICHARD E. HOAGLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 (B), (D)

¶1. (C) Some of the diplomatic corps gathered December 18 for the farewell dinner to fete diplomatic doyen Armenian Ambassador Aram Grigoryan, who departs Turkmenistan December 30 after serving nearly 11 years in his post. When Charge asked about his next assignment, the decidedly drunk Grigoryan muttered vaguely he's returning to his foreign ministry in Yerevan.

THE BACK STORY

¶2. (C) Officious and bullying, the portly Grigoryan did himself in earlier this year when he hosted a dinner marking the anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War, otherwise known as World War II. He told German Ambassador Hans Mondorf he was not allowed to sit with the "winners" because "losers have to sit alone." Rather than admit this was a tasteless joke, he enforced his seating plan.

¶3. (C) Mondorf walked out and reported the incident to his foreign ministry. Berlin formally protested to Yerevan, and Yerevan supposedly recalled Grigoryan. He hosted his own farewell and flew to Armenia. However, he returned to Ashgabat several weeks later, earning the sobriquet Ambassador Boomerang. He bragged he had convinced his foreign ministry to give him time to wind up his business affairs in Ashgabat. Exactly what business affairs he had to wind up is unclear, but it was widely rumored among the ambassadors, whether accurate or not, that Grigoryan owned a string of kebab shops and possibly several brothels.

THE DINNER

¶4. (C) In a show of solidarity, all the FSU ambassadors, including Russian Ambassador Igor Blatov, attended the farewell dinner, but attendance by others was spotty. French Ambassador Christian Lechervy, representing the EU contact embassy, was the Western Europeans' designated goat, but he arrived 90 minutes late and stayed for only a half hour. Ukrainian Ambassador Viktor Mayko, the nominal host, stumbled over his lukewarm opening toast. Searching for something

nice to say, he praised the extremely rotund Grigoryan as a great sportsman. Someone called out, "What sports?" Mayko attempted, "He plays tennis?" Someone else yelled, "No, he plays DVDs!"

¶5. (SBU) Charge was then called on to offer a toast, and toasted "the brave Armenian people and nation." That seemed to set the tone, because the rest of the many toasts during the evening were variations -- toasts to Armenian intelligence, Armenian entrepreneurship, Armenian women, but none specifically to Grigoryan.

THE TORCH IS PASSED

¶6. (U) With Grigoryan's departure, the mantle of doyen now passes to Kyrgyz Ambassador Zarylbek Akmatbekov, an elderly academic who has been in place only six and a half years.

HOAGLAND